(iv) Rationalization of Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) rates for steel exports have been carried out to boost exports.

(v) A Steel Exporters' Forum has been set up to help steel exporters overcome bottlenecks in exports.

(vi) Enhanced project financing to steel sector by All India Financial Institutions and relaxation of ECB norms has been recommended.

(vii) Government has set up an Empowered Committee to examine and assist specific Research and Development Projects to improve technology for steel making and enhance quality of Indian Steel.

(viii) Floor Prices have been fixed by the Government in December, 1998 to prevent the cheap imports of cetain categories of steel.

SAIL has also taken the following steps for improving its performance:

* Greater emphasis on cost control measures.
* Introduction of Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) for employees.
* Market oriented production and product-mix.
* Improvement in techno-economic parameters.
* Increasing sales through aggressive and customer oriented marketing.
* Exploring new ways to bridge the resource gaps through business restructuring initiatives.

Sleel Production by Private Sector

2133. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the target of steel production by the private sector in the current year;

(b) the actual production achieved in the first quarter;

(c) whether private sector can fulfil the demands of steel of this country; and

(d) the average production ratio of private sector every year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Government do not fix or momitor the target of steel production by private sector units. However, the Development Commissioner for Iron and Steel estimates total demand and availability of finished steel on an annual basis. Based on this, the estimated availability of finished steel from the private sector units during 1998-99 is 15.012 Million Tonnes.

(b) The actual production of the finished steel achieved in the first quarter in respect of the private sector is 3 753 Million Tonnes.

(c) The Working Group on Iron and Steel for the IXth Five Year Plan has projected that the private sector units together with the Public Sector units would, by and large be in a position to fulfil the projected demand of steel of the country.

(d) the contribution of the private sector in the overall production of finished steel during 1997-98 and 1998-99 (upto Jan., 1999) arc approximately 62% and 66.87% respectively.

इस्पात संयंत्रों की स्थापना

2134. **प्रो. रामबख्श सिंह वर्मा** :

श्रीमती मालती शर्मा :

क्या इस्पात और खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) देश में 1997-98 तक कितने इस्पात संयंत्र स्थापित हैं;

(ख) क्या सरकार द्वारा नौंवी पंचवर्षीय योजना में इस्पात संयंत्र स्थापित करने का प्रावधान रखा गया हैं; और